

THE GOVERNOR'S STATEWIDE

youthcouncil

FINAL REPORT 2010-2012



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introduction

The governor's statewide youth council

The Governor's Statewide Youth Council is comprised of twenty-eight young people, ages fourteen to twenty, representing the fourteen counties of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Members of the Council are selected to advise the Governor and his administration on key issues affecting youth across the Commonwealth. Members serve for two years and attend bi-monthly meetings over the course of their term.

In 2007 Governor Deval Patrick visited a Dorchester neighborhood in Boston, in response to recent youth-related violence. While there, the Governor was asked by a young woman and members of Dorchester's B.O.L.D. TEENS to provide a voice for youth in shaping the policies that affected them. In order to incorporate youth voices into the policy-making process, Governor Patrick created the Governor's Statewide

Youth Council. Since its creation, the Youth Council's mission has been to advise the Governor in making decisions and setting policy to improve the lives of young people throughout the Commonwealth.

On September 12, 2008, Governor Deval Patrick swore in the inaugural members of the Governor's Statewide Youth Council. The Youth Council serves to provide direct lines of communication between Massachusetts youth and the Governor, to increase youth participation in government and policy decision-making, to support and encourage the development of leadership skills amongst youth, and to create relationships between youth and adult leaders throughout the Commonwealth. This report provides an overview of the work of the second term of the Council, whose members were sworn in on January 14, 2011.

How we got here

Kimberly Mendoza

Although every member of the Governor's Statewide Youth Council heard about this opportunity in slightly different ways, we all applied because we share a passion for bringing about change within our communities. This same passion is what connects us with the previous Council as well. As members of the second Governor's Statewide Youth Council, we all knew that we had big shoes to fill, as the first Council had set a very high bar. But we were definitely up for the challenge. Over the past two years, with our anti-bullying initiative of Blackout

Bullying, a Public Service Announcement, and the screening event for the movie *Bully*, we have more than filled the previous Council's shoes. We have spread awareness about the dangers of bullying, opened eyes that were previously closed, and inspired people to continue in our footsteps. The following report will provide an in depth look at the journey we have traveled together over the past two years. Our hope is that this report helps further inform the public about our activities and conveys our passion for change as individuals and as a group.

Our vision

Manny Cruz

The Governor's Statewide Youth Council provides an opportunity for young leaders to have a voice in shaping legislation, policies, and government decisions that affect youth throughout Massachusetts. Ideally, the Governor's Statewide Youth Council serves as an advisory council to Governor Deval Patrick in four areas that affect youth within the Commonwealth: Youth Violence, Education, Employment, and Healthcare. The Council should function as a central means for youth to be able make an impact throughout the Commonwealth.

Taking this broader purpose into account, our term's Council decided that our vision would be one of a strong commitment to employing a youth-led approach, while recognizing that our initiatives should align with the Governor's directives when it comes

to improving the lives of youth. We saw the need for Council members to work individually within their communities, outside of meetings and along with other organizations, in order to raise awareness about the Youth Council and its work. Collectively within our meetings, our philosophy was that Council members sometimes had to set aside personal initiatives for the sake of accomplishing the goals of the Council, goals that we had developed through consensus decision-making. We saw each Council member as being responsible for knowing when to step up and contribute, and when to take a step back and allow others to have their say. We believe that our vision for our term's Council has served us well, and that we have been able to accomplish a significant amount by staying true to these guiding principles.

Michelle

Lastra

Barnstable
County

W

When I first became aware of the Governor's Statewide Youth Council, I knew that it was the perfect fit for me. I always wanted to become more involved in my own community and I knew that joining this Council would allow me to serve both my community and the Commonwealth as a whole. I had learned about the Council and the opportunities it presented for youth through one of my relatives. When I applied, I made sure to express and emphasize my thoughts regarding the issues on which the Youth Council intended to focus, because these were issues about which I was also passionate.

The experiences that I have had as a member of this Council have been incredibly rewarding. As a member, I have come to appreciate and understand the importance of attending our bi-monthly meetings. These meetings truly allowed everyone to express their views regarding the specific issues we were discussing. Our Council's term focused primarily

on our Blackout Bullying initiative, which I thought was a very important and relevant issue within society today. Being a member of this Council has allowed me to voice my thoughts

"Working with a diverse group of individuals has taught me how to understand everyone's different outlooks on situations and how such diverse perspectives can develop into one single organized plan."

regarding these issues in a very organized and structured format, a skill that I have developed over the course of my time on the Council. Working with a diverse group of individuals has also taught me how to understand everyone's different outlooks

on situations and how such diverse perspectives can develop into one single organized plan.

I have gained so much experience regarding how to interact with other people on issues that confront our communities today. The Governor's Statewide Youth Council has allowed me to gain the confidence, knowledge, and desire to help not only the Commonwealth of Massachusetts tackle these issues, but people throughout our nation as well. My hope is that I will be involved in other organizations like the Council in the future, in order to continue to address a multitude of issues that confront youth and young adults.



"I feel as though we are empowering youth to make a change, no matter how big or small, in their homes or in their communities."

Fallon

BARNSTABLE COUNTY Rice

"To the world you may only be one person, but to one person you may be the world."

—Author Unknown

My name is Fallon Rice and above is my favorite quote. I know that I alone cannot change the world in everyone's eyes, but I also know that I can change one person's view of it. That is what I plan on doing for the rest of my life.

I am a recent graduate from Barnstable High School and I am one of the few kids who didn't run out of the front door on the last day of school saying: "get me out of here!" There was something about my school that made me feel at ease, like a second home. I worked hard at cultivating relationships with my teachers and the administration, relationships that I am confident will last a lifetime. I also worked hard to make Barnstable the best it could be for future students. Throughout my years there I was the President of our Anti-bullying group "All Come Together," the student

coordinator of Challenge Day, and the Vice President of the Free Tibet Club. I also sat on the Principal's Leadership team, I was a member of Mentors in Violence Prevention and a member of the Best Buddies Club. Being a part of these groups made me feel as though I was creating a safer environment in my school. I would voice my opinions and everyone knew that if they needed to talk to anyone they could come to me.

On a larger, community-wide scale, I was a member of a few town committees like the No Place for Hate Committee. For me, voicing my opinion as a youth at these meetings was extremely important because it provided adults with the youth's ideas and perspectives for issues that needed to be addressed in our community. For this reason, when I first heard about the Governor's Statewide Youth Council I was absolutely thrilled to apply. Not only would I be able to help people in my school or in my community, but I would also be able to help youth across the Commonwealth. Being on this Council has helped me

to see what an impact a group of youth can have. With our anti-bullying initiative, we have been able to reach out to groups of people across the state and show them that we are doing everything we can to help and support those victimized by bullying.

As a Council, I feel as though we are empowering youth to make a change, no matter how big or small, in their homes or in their communities. I personally believe that showing support is something that everyone can do, and receiving it is absolutely something everyone needs.

ARIEL BUSH

BERKSHIRE COUNTY

I first heard about the Governor's Statewide Youth Council through a non-profit organization called South Berkshire Community Coalition (SBCC), which works to reduce the use and abuse of drugs and alcohol in the local area. While interning with SBCC over a summer, my advisor thought that being on the Youth Council would be the perfect role for me because of the leadership skills that I had demonstrated to her. She suggested I apply to the Council, and I decided to apply, but in all honesty I sent in my application not really expecting to receive a response. So when I received a letter telling me that there were no open positions and thus the Council could not offer me a spot, I was not incredibly disappointed.

A few months later, however, I received a new letter informing me that a seat had opened which they wanted me to fill on the Council. I was incomparably overjoyed. I immediately began to think of everything we would be doing on the Council and everything that I could bring to the table. I was not entirely sure of the exact type of work that we as the Council would be doing, but I knew that we would be making a difference.

The fact that I could contribute to that excited me. While I couldn't wait to get my hands dirty with Youth Council work, I was also incredibly nervous. I was anxious about entering

"I look forward to every Council meeting because it means that I will be spending the day challenging myself to come up with creative ways to help others."

the group at a time when everyone on the Council already knew, and was accustomed to working with, each other. I would be the new kid. And so I packed my bags for the first meeting feeling extremely apprehensive.

I had no reason to be anxious though. From the first moment my new, eager face walked through those doors, I felt welcomed. The warmth that radiated from all the Council members made me feel comfortable in a way that I cannot even begin to

explain. From then on, we continued to work on Council issues as a group. We had many extended discussions about how we specifically wanted to focus the Council's time and energy. Eventually, we all agreed to focus on bullying—an issue for which I personally lobbied heavily because I saw bullying as a problem that almost every child has either seen or personally faced before.

Out of all of the experiences and lessons I have taken away from my time working on the Council, the most valuable one has been how powerful this work has made me feel. I have acquired the sense that I am making a real difference. I finally felt like I was working towards something that could have a tangible, lasting effect. As youth, we can actually make a difference and create change—I cannot think of a more enlightening feeling. I look forward to every Council meeting because it means that I will be spending the day challenging myself to come up with creative ways to help others. And each time our meetings come to an end, I am quite saddened to say goodbye to the other Council members... at least until the next meeting!



"Without a doubt this has been a considerable learning experience for me about the challenges of group policymaking and implementation."

Taylor

BERKSHIRE COUNTY GARRETT

I was accepted onto the Governor's Statewide Youth Council while I was a sophomore at Mount Everett Regional High School in Berkshire County. I had the highest expectations for my time on this Council. I thought that it was an incredible opportunity to be one among an elite group of youth from all across Massachusetts. I also considered it a great honor to serve on the Council after the former Council's term had accomplished so much through the anti-bullying legislation.

While there are a number of positive aspects of serving on the Council, I think that it is also worth highlighting that the program still faces a number of challenges. One of the first challenges I faced was adapting to the changes in membership during our term. A few high school seniors were inducted during the beginning of our term, but because they ended up leaving for college they were replaced a quarter of the way through our term. Another obstacle I personally faced was how far away some of the meetings were.

The last challenge I experienced on the Council related to the fact that we all came from different areas of the state, and thus we all experience different youth-related problems and held different views about what the focus for our Council term should have been. While diversity in opinion does serve as an asset in the development of ideas and initiatives, it can also slow down group decision-making, and sometimes it is difficult to achieve a balance between the benefits and challenges of diversity. On the Council, the process of settling on bullying as the focus of our initiative took numerous discussions and meetings, with genuine consensus being difficult to achieve. Like every new opportunity, though, I will cherish the time I have spent with all of the amazing students and youth I met during my time on the Council. And without a doubt this has been a considerable learning experience for me about the challenges of group policymaking and implementation.

Gabrielle

BRISTOL
COUNTY

Monteiro



"After my time on the Council comes to an end, I want to continue being a leader in my school and community."

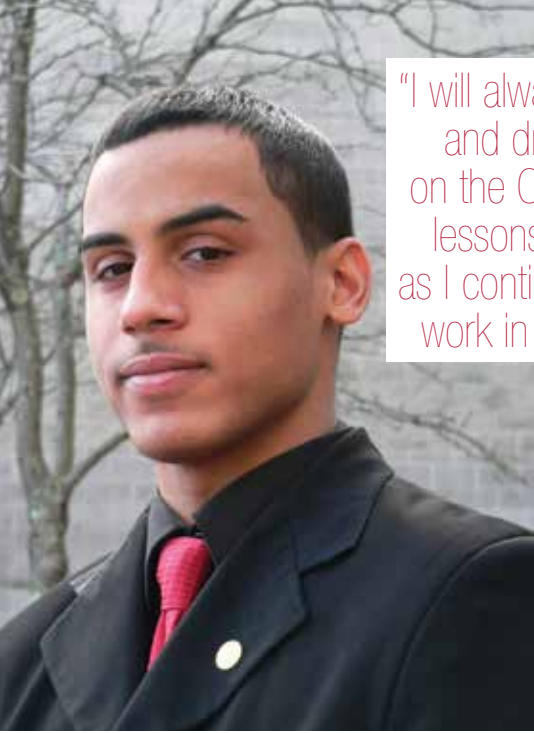
I first heard about the Governor's Statewide Youth Council from my mother. The more she told me about it, the more interested I grew in applying and taking on such a leadership role. I wanted to join the Council because I felt like it would be a great opportunity to help youth in my community and across the state. I wanted to help give youth a voice in decisions that both involve and affect them. But most importantly, I also hoped to be able to help bring about changes in and raise awareness about issues involving youth individually and across the Commonwealth.

My time on the Youth Council has been a truly great experience. By participating in Council meetings, I have learned to express my thoughts on issues that I personally felt were important, such as working to target a younger age group with anti-bullying campaigns. I have also enjoyed listening to the great ideas that others have brought to the table. Working with a diverse group of kids from across the state is really something I have come to deeply appreciate.

The Council included youth from western Massachusetts all the way to Nantucket, and the communities found across our Commonwealth are vastly different. Some Council members came from very large schools and some from very small ones. Some were in high school while others were in college, but all of us brought to the group an amazing amount of diversity that some of us do not typically experience within our hometowns. This not only helped me to realize both how similar and how different our individual communities are, but also how we can still come together as a group and share common ideas and interests. Everyone was always open to each other's opinions and always listened to what everyone else had to say and then worked to incorporate these opinions into our decisions. I think every single one of us on the Council has learned invaluable lessons from that experience.

The Council's main initiative for our term—Blackout Bullying—was a huge success. A large number of kids from my own school participated

in these events, as did many others from across the state. The event in my own community was especially successful because it kicked off a series of anti-bullying events and discussions at my school. I am incredibly grateful that I was able to get youth involved in the Blackout Bullying initiative, to help spread awareness about this serious and widespread issue. The entire campaign was really valuable and influential, because it demonstrated to youth that they can make a difference and bring about change surrounding a problem that affects either them personally or other youth like them. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to reach out to my own community and truly make a difference. After my time on the Council comes to an end, I want to continue being a leader in my school and community, to help to bring about change, whether it be through volunteering, speaking up about important issues or helping others develop a voice to speak up for themselves. As the Council's work has taught me, all of these voices really can make a difference.



"I will always reflect on and draw from my time on the Council and the lessons that I have learned as I continue my public service work in the future."

Manny
CRUZ
ESSEX
COUNTY

I have always felt that leadership qualities were embedded in me. I had the raw potential to inspire, to lead, and to bring people of all different kinds of backgrounds together. I had the required resources to use my basic leadership skills, however I felt that I could not fully blossom and develop without the right structure, the proper guidance, and a group of peers who would challenge me to be the best leader that I could be. The Governor's Statewide Youth Council has provided me with all of this and much more. The Youth Council is an excellent opportunity for us as youth to develop and grow into contributing and engaged members of society. I think one of the most powerful things about this Council is the fact that the direction of the Council rests entirely in the hands of youth. Being elected the Chairman, I was given the power and responsibility by my peers to shape the direction and be the voice of our Council. It has been an honor that I cherish, and a challenge

that I have welcomed. It has been an invaluable experience and I will always reflect on and draw from my time on the Council and the lessons that I have learned as I continue my public service work in the future.

"Wherever I am in life,
if I want to create positive change,
I have acquired the skills and
mindset from the Council
to do so."

Emaan Syed

ESSEX
COUNTY



Ever since the inception of the Governor's Statewide Youth Council in 2008, it has been a dream of mine to belong to this unique group of youth representatives. The moment I heard about this Council, my biggest goal at the time was to somehow be a part of this amazing opportunity. At the very least I wanted to help those my age as much as possible and to the best of my ability. Four years later, I am a graduating Youth Council Member. And over these past two years as a member, I could not be any more satisfied with where the Council has gone, how it has grown and the impact it has made on the Commonwealth at large. To me, the Youth Council is more than just a group of diverse students speaking out on youth issues, though it is certainly that. But it is also an impactful family that has grown together over the past two years and has created the foundation for change upon which future Youth Council members can build.

I started serving on the Youth Council as a North Andover High School Senior and will be ending my term as

a rising sophomore at University of Massachusetts Amherst. My time spent on the Youth Council has reaffirmed my commitment to continue striving to change lives for the better no matter where I end up in life. The Youth Council has taught me that there are no boundaries to seeking a positive solution to any issue we face. Wherever I am in life, as a current or former Youth Council member, if I want to create positive change in my life or in the lives of others, I have acquired the skills and mindset from the Council to do so. In addition to learning new skills, my favorite part of serving on the Council has been the opportunity to travel to different parts of Massachusetts for each of our meetings. I myself am from Essex County, and by serving on the Council I have been fortunate enough to see the beauty across our Commonwealth. More importantly, I have been given the chance to meet unique people from different counties who I would not usually encounter.

Besides witnessing this diversity within and across the Commonwealth, my

life has changed greatly since I started on the Council. I graduated from high school, I started college, I held my first job and my first internship, and I even had the opportunity to travel to Africa. Through every chapter of the past two years of my life, the Council as a group—as a family—was always there for me, to congratulate me on my achievements, to wait expectantly with me for college acceptances, and to support me in whatever endeavor I chose. This support and encouragement has been perhaps the most invaluable aspect of my experience serving on the Youth Council, and one for which I will always be grateful.



Emily

Bolduc

Franklin County

"I love the people
that I've met on the Council
and I am proud of the things
that we have accomplished."

I first heard about the Governor's Statewide Youth Council while I was working at the Franklin County Community Action Youth Programs in Greenfield. From the minute I found out about the Council I knew I wanted to apply. I had always been involved in my community through Community Action. I had worked on several projects there, including the Sticker Shock campaign, which was created to help discourage adults from buying alcohol for minors in order to reduce teen drinking. Another initiative in which I am involved is the Shout Out program, for which my peers and I lead a workshop on cooking for teens on a budget. I knew that being a part of the Council would give me the opportunity to be involved in so much more than these (albeit valuable and worthwhile) local programs. Most importantly, I wanted to be a part of and contribute to the larger youth community in the Commonwealth, and I knew that through the Governor's Statewide Youth Council

I would be able to work with youth from across the state.

When I first applied, I honestly wasn't sure what to expect. I hoped that there would be a large amount of diversity in the group. I also hoped that the youth members of the Council would be the ones leading its work and direction. I had never been a part of something like this before, so I had many high expectations for the experience. And I am happy to say that all of them have been met!

From my experience on the Youth Council, I have learned a great deal about the way our state government works, how it operates and how it decides on and implements policies. I have also learned how to work with others to achieve a specific goal—valuable lessons about how to decide on a particular goal as a group, and then to strategize all the different ways that that goal can be achieved. I am happy that I joined the Council

because I have taken away so much from this truly wonderful experience. I love the people that I've met on the Council and I am proud of the things that we have accomplished. I believe that Blackout Bullying was one of the greatest and most significant projects that we did, and I am incredibly proud of that accomplishment. I hope that the next Council continues having Blackout Bullying events on No Name-Calling Day because this is an event that can really make a difference. The issue that our Council decided to address—bullying—is a serious problem throughout the state and country, and I am glad that we were able to work towards a better future for victims of bullying in Massachusetts. Overall, I am extremely grateful to have had the opportunity to work on the Council and meet all of its diverse members. It has truly been an experience that I will never forget.

Juan Gonzales

Hampden
County

"We are taking a monumental first step in contributing to youth-led advocacy's influence on decision makers on Beacon Hill."



I was a freshman at Westfield State University majoring in Political Science when the opportunity to serve on the Governor's Statewide Youth Council arose. I was thrilled at the opportunity to act as an advocate for youth in Hampden County. I was born and raised in the city of Holyoke, which was once named the Paper City of the World because it was the leading paper production city. Growing up in an urban city where 52.5% of the population is Hispanic, I have been exposed to a variety of issues and failures of services for young people, such as education and employment opportunities, which create obstacles to increasing our overall quality of life. Still, I have always been active in my community and an eager participant in community-oriented events and gatherings. I have also had the opportunity to meet enthusiastic community leaders. In doing so, I have gained a better first-hand understanding of the issues faced by all youth and have developed necessary advocacy, leadership, communication and public speaking skills.

Joining the Governor's Statewide Youth Council has enhanced this

understanding even further. By engaging in collaborative discussions with other representatives on the Council, we are taking a monumental first step in contributing to youth-led advocacy's influence on decision makers on Beacon Hill. Being a representative on the Council enables me to raise issues facing youth in Hampden County and to then approach them with innovative solutions. I have been able to do so because, as a member of the Youth Council, I have become more acquainted with the levels of government involved in policymaking and have gained a better understanding of how the State Government interacts with all of the relevant players involved.

I have come to better understand the considerable advisory power that we as the Governor's Statewide Youth Council have to recommend and advise the Governor and his administration. As a Council we have been able to more effectively decide on winnable campaigns because we have a deeper understanding of the inner workings of the State Government. The Governor's Youth Council represents an opportunity for youth from across the Commonwealth of

Massachusetts to be leaders within their community and address, speak about, and advocate for solutions to issues affecting youth.

I am highly satisfied with the work that this Council has accomplished over the past two years. During my time on the Council, I have been able to meet passionate adults in my community who truly care about youth and their future. I have been pleasantly surprised by the commonalities across our diverse members that manifest themselves during our meetings. Last but not least our successful initiative—Blackout Bullying—is probably our term's landmark initiative that will be enshrined in the books of the Governor's Statewide Youth Council. I encourage youth leaders across the Commonwealth to take advantage of this exciting and life-changing opportunity by applying for the next Youth Council. Youth truly can make a difference.



"The work we do is extremely fulfilling and the bonds we have formed are incredible."

james villalobos

Hampden
County

Springfield, Massachusetts: the birthplace of basketball, the city of firsts, home of Smith and Wesson, and home of the Springfield Armory. Wouldn't it be great if people thought: "Oh wow, Springfield seems like an amazing place to go with so much history behind it!" Unfortunately, my hometown has been ranked the twelfth most violent city in the United States, due to the rising incidents of violence amongst a population of over 150,000 people. However, I knew violence wasn't our only concern. Hampden County still faces a number of other issues, including poverty, teen pregnancy, and bullying. The most visible case of bullying was that of Carl Joseph Walker Hoover, who was just eleven years old when he committed suicide following constant bullying at his middle school.

At the young age of fourteen, I strived to change the perception that many had of youth in the City of Springfield, and soon enough I found

myself getting involved with all kinds of organizations and movements to help make Springfield a better place to live and work. Darryl Moss, the mayoral aide to Mayor Domenic J. Sarno, told me about the opportunity of serving on the Governor's Statewide Youth Council, and within hours I was on the State House website looking for the application. I went into this Council experience thinking that we would bounce around ideas, learn about each other's respective communities and discuss workable strategies to address shared issues. But during my two-year term, the Council has become something greater than that: we are a family. There is never a dull moment when I am with the Council, whether it be with Manny who I pretty much see as a big brother (and who sees me as Robin to his Batman) or Leeara, with whom I can joke around like a sister.

The work we do is extremely fulfilling and the bonds we have formed are incredible, but it has not always been

fun and games. When we in the planning stages of an event, for example Blackout Bullying, you better believe there was arguing! Tensions grew and people often became frustrated. However, as leaders within our own communities, we were all able to move past these challenges, largely because of the fact that outside of these meetings we were also all friends. Serving on the Governor's Statewide Youth Council has been one of the greatest experiences of my life. And I know I am not saying goodbye to this experience because I will surely be around to help future councils strive to achieve their goals. And of course I will remain in contact with fellow members from this Council!

Kaden

Belanger

Hampshire County

"The process of group decision-making—particularly for a group as diverse as the Youth Council—is incredibly challenging."



At my high school, South Hadley High, I am incredibly active in my community, serving as student government and class president. In fact, this was what initially motivated me to apply to the Governor's Statewide Youth Council. As a leader in my high school, I wanted to continue my valuable and gratifying work in politics, by helping youth through the legislative process. When a former teacher first told me about the Council, I immediately applied in order to continue being an active role model for and leader of my peers.

I initially held unrealistically high expectations for the Council. I imagined it as a unified force that would work together as a coherent group to help youth throughout our Commonwealth. Despite it being an incredibly valuable experience, during our two-year term my perspective on and expectations for the Council have been tempered somewhat. Over the course of our first few meetings, I began to realize that bringing about

tangible change at the statewide level was nowhere near as easy as it was in my high school. It took a fairly long time for the Council to reach a decision on what we wanted to accomplish in and for the Commonwealth during our term. Each Council member brought to the table fantastic ideas to help our own individual counties, but as a group we had trouble trying to connect all of these ideas within a coherent game plan. I now realize that the process of group decision-making—particularly for a group as diverse as the Youth Council—is incredibly challenging.

Looking back over the past two years, I wish we had focused more of our time and energy on coordinating and helping our own counties, rather than focusing exclusively on the state as a whole. Each county is so unique, each deals with such different forms of violence and bullying, that it was hard to come to a consensus on what type of initiative to establish. If we had worked as a Council to divide

our energies equally between coordinating assistance for our individual counties and the state as a whole, I believe that we could have accomplished even more than our term's truly commendable achievements.



"I have been blown away by the diversity of the powerful characters that make up our group."

Tanya Karagiannis

Hampshire County

Serving on the Governor's Statewide Youth Council has been an incredible experience for me. When I first heard about the Council, I was thrilled by the idea of a group that enables youth representatives of each county in Massachusetts to give a voice to the students and youth in their area and to advocate for their ideas. There are several issues faced by the Commonwealth that affect youth in particular, such as bullying, the achievement gap, and poverty. In order for the Commonwealth to take proper action towards such issues, it needs to understand the mindset and views of the affected generation, especially since today's youth will be tomorrow's future leaders. With that in mind, I wanted desperately to bring positive ideas and changes to Massachusetts and so decided to apply to the Youth Council.

Once on the Council, I found that each member cared about a range of issues faced by youth in our respective counties. For instance, my own

volunteering and involvement in my community opened my eyes to the issues of bullying, education, and homelessness. During the first few council meetings, we learned more about how the state government operates and the different methods available to create solutions for and spread awareness about various community issues. Through those meetings, we realized that creating solutions for one particular issue—bullying—could actually lead down a path towards fixing other problems facing our communities, such as the achievement gap.

Looking back, I realize that my expectations could not even begin to match the actual experience of serving on the Council. I have been blown away by the diversity of the powerful characters that make up our group. All of the Council members have been so open, friendly, and dedicated to the group and to our work. For example, when we were planning Blackout Bullying Day, it

took us several meetings and conference calls to plan the details because all of us were so driven to make the event successful. The respect that we have developed for each other and the teamwork that has resulted has been truly amazing to witness. Over the course of the past two years, the Council has evolved into a dynamic family of twenty-eight youth accommodating and sometimes even unifying diverse perspectives, experiences and outlook in life. Each moment that I have spent with the Youth Council is a moment I will never forget.

KEVIN

Middlesex County

"Being a part of the Council has been such an honor, knowing that collectively we have impacted youth."



When I first applied to the Governor's Statewide Youth Council, I thought that I had little chance of being accepted. My mentality was that I was just a young fourteen year-old, so why would such a prestigious body choose me? When I first received the phone call about my acceptance, I didn't know how to express my joy over the phone. I remember simply muttering a "woohoo" and repeatedly expressing thanks for the opportunity. As soon as I hung up, I dialed my mother's number and together we squirmed in celebration. She was extremely proud, just like me, and even promised to buy me the newest iPhone (which she has yet to do...). This was the beginning of one of my most memorable experiences—that of serving on the Governor's Statewide Youth Council.

In joining the Council, I expected to continue my previous work with Somerville Positive Forces Jr., addressing the numerous problems faced by today's youth. But instead of focusing

solely on teenagers in Somerville, I hoped to be able to translate my work on these issues to a much larger scale: the entire Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The time I have spent on the Council has far exceeded these expectations. After two meetings, we were already working vigorously to prevent bullying and to spread the word about No Name-Calling Day. Through working on those two initiatives, I found that not only was I having a positive influence on my peers as I had with Somerville Positive Forces Jr., but I was also having an impact on adults, gaining their support and recognition. They praised the Council's work in news articles and told me that they also hoped to see a change within the community.

One of the most unique aspects of the Council is definitely its diversity. If you take a look around our meetings, you see members from different cultural backgrounds and neighborhoods. This diversity brings a variety of views on different issues, allowing us to attack

any specific problem, like bullying, much more effectively. By far my favorite part of Youth Council meetings is the opportunity to hear other peoples' opinions, and particularly how they relate their own personal and school experiences to the conversation. Through these discussions, I have heard about places in Massachusetts that I usually don't hear much about in Boston, such as Martha's Vineyard. Engaging in interesting conversations with members from all around the state has definitely been a major plus of my time on the Council—almost matched by the all-day buffet table decked out with food that is provided at every meeting. Being a part of the Council has been such an honor, knowing that collectively we have impacted youth, whether by directly influencing them to make better choices or by simply helping them develop a greater awareness of the problems surrounding them.



"It really helped me to appreciate the challenges that people who work to make policy decisions in our Commonwealth and country face every day."

EVE
Manghis
NANTUCKET
COUNTY

I have been a member of the Governor's Statewide Youth Council for less than a year, but my experience with the group during this short period of time has not lacked significance in any way. I originally decided to join the Council after a friend of mine resigned due to the distance between Massachusetts and his college of choice. Joining the Council seemed like a good way to get involved with my community and with other youth across the Commonwealth. I also liked that I would have the opportunity to listen to youth perspectives from outside of the island of Nantucket and learn what was going on within their own communities. Having lived on Nantucket for almost my entire life, I have never really had the opportunity to see how school systems and communities outside of my own little world operate, how they approach problems or issues affecting youth, and the types of issues facing youth in various communities. I thought that serving

on the Youth Council would broaden my perspective on how youth live in different and diverse communities.

Because I joined the Council in the middle of a term, I needed to catch up with the other Council members and had a lot to learn about how the group worked. More importantly, I needed to quickly learn a considerable amount about the issue on which the Council had decided to focus for its initiative—bullying. At first I experienced some frustration with the obstacles we as a Council faced in reaching a consensus quickly, and it took a while for me to understand that making decisions as a group is a difficult process that takes time. Coming to this realization was one of the major lessons I have taken away from my time on the Council. And it really helped me to appreciate the challenges that people who work to make policy decisions in our Commonwealth and country face every day, as their job is much more difficult than I had ever imagined.

COOPER

NANTUCKET COUNTY VOUGHT

I was not a member of the Governor's Statewide Youth Council from the beginning of this term, but rather came on board halfway through because another Council member from my county had to leave for college. For this reason, I did not participate in deciding what the focus of our Council's term should be or how to implement our initiative. At first, this inhibited my ability to take a leading role during Council meetings. Instead, I adopted the role of an observer, trying to figure out what the Council was about and how we worked. And to be honest, I am still in the observing phase, soaking it all in, in order to use these observations to push the next Council in the right direction.

When I was first accepted onto the Council, I wasn't exactly sure what to expect. I was not entirely certain what the Council was and was not able to accomplish. I expected that it would be a good leadership experience, though, and that we would be able to do something positive to change our communities for the better. But at the time, I only had a vague idea of the Council's purpose and potential.

Looking back, serving on the Council has been a completely new and

enlightening experience for me. I am not accustomed to being part of such a large group of youth with such diverse backgrounds. I have thus had to learn how to negotiate our group dynamics, how I personally work best with others and how I can use this to help my own community. I have also learned a lot about the diversity of issues facing youth across the state. While bullying is a pervasive and serious problem in many areas, it is not as much of an issue within my own community, which

"I have had to learn how to negotiate our group dynamics, how I personally work best with others and how I can use this to help my own community."

is fairly small and close-knit. I often see public service announcements regarding the effects of bullying and I was aware of Massachusetts' anti-bullying legislation. However, until my time on the Council I wasn't really aware of how other people connected with those messages because I did not do so personally. Through our Council meetings, I now recognize why and how preventing bullying is a very

important cause for our Commonwealth as a whole.

I have reapplied to the Governor's Statewide Youth Council for the next term. If accepted again, I think I will be a positive addition because I have learned about the Council from being on it. I want to take these lessons and my experience and use them to help the new Council set initiatives and accomplish goals. As a member for the next term, I will also provide some continuity across Council terms, as I have a good sense of how the Council works and how we can best accomplish the tasks we set for ourselves.

I think the Youth Council is a fantastic way to empower youth to play some sort of leadership role within their communities and statewide. I have learned that we—the youth of this state—do matter, that people do listen to our ideas. Our Blackout Bullying initiative really made this apparent to me. It was inspiring to witness what other members were able to accomplish within their communities because I never really thought that someone our age would be able to plan and organize something that could mobilize so many people and make such an impact.

Danisha

NORFOLK COUNTY DUMMORRAY

Growing up in a small town, I always looked for opportunities that would expand my perspective. I refused to sit inside, and instead of going outside to play, I preferred to go out and serve. I served as a leader in many organizations within my community: Vice President of my graduating class, President of my Choral Music department, Youth Ambassador of Cultural Services, the list continues. I have never been one to blend in, and always sought to promote awareness about any issue about which I felt most passionate. Each passion or focus tended to build off of the previous one. As a sophomore in high school, I began searching for a way to invest my time and energy in something bigger and broader than community-focused projects. I remember that I conducted an Internet search that led to a link for “Deval Patrick’s Statewide Youth Council.” I immediately was drawn to the title of this group and knew that I wanted this to be my next passion.

I applied immediately and after a few months was notified that I was the newest Governor’s Statewide Youth Council member and would be sworn in shortly. At the time, it all felt so official and a bit surreal. Shortly after completing the necessary paperwork and attending the swearing-in

ceremony, I was ready to sit side-by-side with a few dozen of the state’s most well rounded youth leaders. It was not intimidating so much as it was nerve-wrecking; being the new kid within a group can sometimes be challenging when bonds have already made and events have already been planned. Slowly but surely, though, I

“I was honored to have been accepted into such a prestigious council of young activists, advocates, and artists, who truly have more in common than I had initially expected.”

have integrated myself with the other Council members, in hopes to find a common ground. I was honored to have been accepted into such a prestigious council of young activists, advocates, and artists, who truly have more in common than I had initially expected. We all have the same goal: we want our voices to be heard and will stop at very little until we raise awareness about any issue about which we are passionate.

Sometimes, though, I feel that we do not realize that we—as the

Council—have a lot of power and tremendous potential to accomplish transformative goals. It is the type of power that many people, like myself, who come from a small town are often not fortunate to find. Though I truly am committed to addressing bullying and the damage that it so often causes, I see so many more obstacles and issues faced by youth that we—as the Council and as the Commonwealth of Massachusetts—need to address. I often read in the *Boston Globe* about the drastic increases in murder rates or the number of public disturbances involving armed weapons. Personally, as I have grown older and begun to prepare for college and beyond, I observe that interest rates on student loans are increasing while the number and amount of grants and scholarships are decreasing. These represent merely two issues out of many that I believe we have the power to take a stand on and attempt to change. I hope future councils pay attention to what is relevant to and what can have an impact on their communities, and then really decide to speak out and reach out about these issues. As for me, I know my first steps to achieving these goals have been laid in every Council meeting I attend.

"I felt an urgent need to do something in and for my community. The opportunity presented by membership on the Youth Council could not have been more perfect."

Kimberly

SUFFOLK COUNTY **mendoza**



My desire to apply to the Governor's Statewide Youth Council was first sparked in 2010 by the reactions to and uproar over Arizona's controversial immigration law, Senate Bill 1070. Coming from a Hispanic household, immigration was not a foreign issue to me. Both my parents had immigrated to the United States so that I could grow up with the best opportunities. It was hard at the time—and still incredibly difficult—to wrap my head around the Arizona law, which seemed to target families that only desire a better life.

At the time, I felt an urgent need to do something in and for my community. The opportunity presented by membership on the Youth Council could not have been more perfect. Participation in the Youth Council's work was just what I needed, something that would not only familiarize me with how the government operates but also provide an experience that was not "just for show." We actually can and do make a difference

with the work we do on the Council. In addition, I wanted to apply to the Council so that I could learn more about how my state government operates, how it decides to create and implement policies. Membership on the Council represented the ideal chance to do just this. Overall, I saw the experience of the Council as one that would allow me to participate in something real, somewhere where I could make my voice heard, directly to the most powerful man in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts—the Governor himself.

My experience serving on the Governor's Statewide Youth Council has not only inspired me to become a leader in my own community, but it has also given me the courage to go one step further. As a rising freshman at Tufts University, I now have the privilege of being in an environment where global leadership is expected and encouraged. I am incredibly grateful for the fact that with what I have learned serving on the Youth Council, I know I will

thrive here. During my time on the Council, I have learned to speak up when I need to, master and overcome my shyness, and stand up for issues about which I am passionate. More importantly, I now know that I am able to make an impact not only in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, but also hopefully in other places around the world.

jamila

sealy-norvin

SUFFOLK COUNTY

I decided to apply for the Governor's Statewide Youth Council because I wanted to be able to help my own and other communities confront problems faced by youth. In particular, I sought to speak up for, give a voice to and demand change on behalf of youth who felt that they could not enact change because of their age.

When I first heard that I was accepted onto the Youth Council, I was ecstatic because I knew this opportunity would allow me to be able to help others and make a difference in our communities. During my time on the Council, I have learned that youth from across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts face numerous and diverse problems and challenges. However, this experience has also taught me that we as youth can and must speak up and demand change because we are our communities' future. If we want the obstacles we

face to change, if we want our communities to improve and for crime and violence to decrease, we have to take a stand and work together. Lastly

"I have been able to meet and share ideas with people who have the same passion for improving our communities as I do."

and perhaps most importantly, I have enjoyed being a part of this Youth Council because I have been able to meet and share ideas with people who have the same passion for improving our communities as I do.

My time on the Youth Council has left an enormous impact on my life and my mindset. I now know that change is possible and that we just

have to keep working together and not let our passion for societal equality or reducing violence and crime ever fade. I think that my remaining time on the Council will be equally fulfilling, and that we will accomplish everything that we have set out to do. Above all, I believe that we are leaving an optimistic attitude and message of hope for the next Governor's Statewide Youth Council.

CALEB

WORCESTER
COUNTY ENCARNACION-RIVERA

"Joining the Youth Council has provided me with a new opportunity to exercise my passion for social justice."



I am a strong believer in youth community activism. I see youth as being an important element of any community because of the impact that youth can have and the changes that they can bring about. Throughout the past couple of years, during my time on the Council and even before, I have seen the significant impact that youth can make in a community when they unite in solidarity. As a youth living in the City of Worcester in Worcester County, I have always had a passion for improving and helping my community in any way that I am able. When someone is in need of help or a problem arises in my community, I am always more than willing to assist in any way that I can. I also am continuously searching for new ideas or ways to improve my community, whether it involves focusing on education, violence, employment, or (local) government. When an issue arises that begins to affect my community in a negative manner, I try my best to raise awareness about and motivate others to become a part of addressing and fixing the issue. Over the past few years, I have become the community activist I believe I was meant to be,

both in my own community and abroad in third world countries.

Joining the Youth Council has provided me with a new opportunity to exercise my passion for social justice, and to help this passion grow and develop. Taking this community leadership role on the Youth Council has allowed me to take the next steps in my journey towards bringing about long-lasting changes in society. More importantly, it has allowed me to do so along with other youth. The changes that the Council has effected have really been viewed as significant accomplishments in and by our communities. For example, the messages of No Name-Calling Day and Blackout Bullying have been met with high praise and admiration by adult community leaders. The momentum and mobilization that the Youth Council has helped initiate and push forward has inspired so many individuals within our communities, drawing in both young and old alike across the Commonwealth.

In addition, my time on the Youth Council has taught me so much in

so many different ways. Despite the fact that we are from different parts of the state and hold different views about what we think youth experience in their daily lives, we still find ways to collaborate and identify underlying similarities between problems that affect youth statewide. We are also able to figure out as a group ways in which we can work to address these issues.

When I walk into our Council meetings, I can feel the energy and the anticipation of accomplishment that we all have as Council members. The Governor's Statewide Youth Council has truly fulfilled the saying "actions speak louder than words." Not only do we sit, think, and plan for considerable amounts of time, but we also motivate, mobilize, and act to make a difference within our own communities and statewide. The most important lesson that I have taken away from my experience on this Council is that young people do have a voice, and when youth come together they really do have the power to bring about changes that will never be forgotten.



"I believed—and still believe—that if a group of ambitious and motivated teens like myself came together, we could accomplish whatever we put our minds to."

Kiara Lum

WORCESTER COUNTY

From the moment that I first heard about the Governor's Statewide Youth Council and its mission, I was eager to apply and become a member. I saw membership on the Council as a rare opportunity to become involved at the statewide level. For me this opportunity was significant because it gave me the chance to discuss issues that matter to me with a group of like-minded youth, while also allowing me to take a step out of my comfort zone and small town of Hopedale. I knew from the very beginning that the Council could accomplish a lot over the course of our time together, and I was excited to be a part of it. It seemed obvious to me that this would be a wonderful experience since I would be meeting people from across the state and learning things about which I otherwise would still be ignorant. I believed—and still believe—that if a group of ambitious and motivated teens like myself came together, we could accomplish whatever we put our minds to, whether our initiative concerned youth violence, education or healthcare. I have not been disappointed.

My experience on the Youth Council so far has been different from any

other experience I have ever had. It has been amazing to meet other youth who have the same mindset, goals, and drive to make a difference in their own lives and in the lives of people around them. But at the same time, the Youth Council also represents the diversity of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Because of this, the Council has a unique way of approaching community issues from different viewpoints and then learning how to incorporate these different perspectives and work together to achieve common goals. No matter how small the topic or issue, we always have amazing discussions during our meetings and generate a vast range of new and inspiring ideas. I am constantly motivated by the effort other members have made in their communities and proud of the accomplishments we have achieved together. I have learned an enormous amount from the other members and their struggles. In addition to these youth perspectives, people from outside the Youth Council also attend some of our meetings. These outside perspectives—from Michael from the State Board of Education, to Visions (which led a training on diversity and inclusion) and the representative from the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center—have opened my eyes to the multitude of issues affecting young people. But more importantly, they have made me realize what a body like the Governor's Statewide Youth

Council can accomplish and our potential to effect significant changes in our communities.

Our remaining time on the Governor's Council will surely fly by. We have many ideas and plans for various projects, such as a public service announcement and event at the start of the 2012-2013 school year. My fervent hope is that we have laid the groundwork for our initiatives to be continued and built upon in the future. In addition, I am thrilled to be a part of the Council's alumni network because I have made many connections during my time on the Council and hope to stay involved even after I leave. I did not anticipate making such strong and lasting friendships, but I am certainly lucky that I have had the chance to meet my fellow Council members. This Council is truly a remarkable group of individuals who have helped me grow through my high school career. Being exposed to the government, youth related issues and people from across the state and all walks of life, has been an invaluable experience for me. The Governor's Statewide Youth Council has instilled a confidence and open-mindedness in me that I do not think I will ever lose. The experiences we have gained and the lessons we have learned on the Council have undoubtedly prepared us for success in the future, both as a group and individually.

OUR JOURNEY

swearing-in ceremony

Manny Cruz

14 JANUARY 2011

Before officially becoming members of the Governors Statewide Youth Council, we were sworn in by the Governor and his staff. This swearing-in ceremony was the first time that all of our term's Council members met together as a Council. I can still remember the ceremony like it was yesterday. It took place at the State House in Boston on the Grand Staircase in front of the Governor's staff, former members of the Youth Council, our friends and family, and the media. My basketball coach once told me that "big things have small beginnings." This saying sums up the swearing-in ceremony for the Council and everything that we have since accomplished. I remember feeling incredibly nervous and excited, because I had no idea what to expect from this experience. Little did we know that as the incoming Council members, we were embarking on the journey of a lifetime. As each of our names was called, all I could feel was a sense of belonging even though I did not yet know every person on the Council. But I was certain that eventually we would become a team, working in complete synergy. As I had foreseen, by the time we had gone through our orientation meeting this vision began to come to fruition.

governor's statewide youth council orientation

12 FEBRUARY 2011

This was the first time the Youth Council met as a group following the swearing-in ceremony. The purpose of this meeting was to get to know each other and break the ice.

gsyc meeting: The policy-making process and council rules and protocols

19 MARCH 2011

9 MAY 2011

Launch of the Massachusetts Safe and Successful Youth Initiative

Caleb S. Encarnacion-Rivera

The Massachusetts Safe and Successful Youth Initiative (SSYI) is a multi-dimensional strategy designed to end youth violence in communities throughout the Commonwealth. On May 9, 2011 a press conference was held to launch the SSYI. For this press conference, I traveled from Worcester to Boston. When I arrived, I was met by Anny Jean-Jacques, from the Governor's Office, and Manny Cruz, the Chairman of the Youth Council. Anny gave me a run-down of the scheduled events. I then talked with a reporter, who asked me about my planned speech and my thoughts on how violence affects our communities in Massachusetts.

Following this I was led onto the stage, where I stood until it was my turn to speak. Before I took the podium, both Mayor Thomas Menino and Massachusetts Attorney General Martha Coakley spoke about how important it was to address violence within communities across the Commonwealth. When my turn came, I spoke about growing up in the inner city and seeing a large amount of violence around me. I also stressed that we should never forget about the countless youth that have lost their lives due to such violence. Governor Deval Patrick then spoke about the violence to which youth are subject in the city of Boston. Following the speeches, I talked with a few more reporters and had my picture taken with the Governor and all those who had stood on the stage.

Overall, I believe this event was a success in terms of spreading the word and letting people know about the Safe and Successful Youth Initiative. I personally felt that it was important that I spoke on behalf of the Youth Council, because this press conference was directed toward the betterment of youth and it was essential that youth had a voice in spreading this message.

21 MAY 2011

SSYC Meeting: Student Advisory Council

Emaan Syed

On May 21, 2011 the Council held our meeting in Cape Cod, where one of our guest speakers was Michael D'Ortenzio. D'Ortenzio is a student member of the Massachusetts Board of Education, and is also the chair of the Massachusetts Student Advisory Council. During this meeting, we as the Youth Council heard about the structure of the State Student Advisory Council and how forty-four members through eleven councils from the five regions of Massachusetts ultimately elect one Chair who serves for two years on the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. We also learned about the Board's two main educational focuses: to minimize the achievement gap and to prepare students for college or career in the 21st century.

Related to this, we discussed policy and advocacy in the educational context. Supporting and working on both policy development and reform advocacy is absolutely central to attaining substantive reform of the state's educational system, in order to create higher educational standards. Although our state can be proud of its educational system as one of the top in the country, there still remains much work to be done. In particular, we need to develop more educational pathways in order to accommodate all types of learners.

Election of Officers

Manny Cruz,
James Villalobos, and
Kimberly Mendoza

16 JULY 2011

Every single person on the Youth Council is a leader in his or her own way. Within our communities, schools or churches, we are all contributing members of society. Because we are all leaders in our own specific community, we are all very opinionated and passionate about our own ideas and goals. However, in order for us to focus we need leaders within our group of leaders to help facilitate Council meetings. The leaders do not call all the shots, but they do help guide the information and ideas we generate in a productive way. Each elected officer plays a distinct role in ensuring that meetings run smoothly. The Chairperson is responsible for facilitating meetings and ensuring all members are given an equal opportunity to have their opinions heard. The Chairperson also has the responsibility of taking charge of the direction of the Council when members cannot come to a consensus. The Vice-Chairperson must be prepared at all times to assume the role and responsibilities of the Chairperson in his/her absence. During meetings, the Vice-Chairperson serves in an advisory capacity to the Chairperson and helps to steer the Council's conversations. The Secretary is responsible for keeping minutes of the meetings, emailing reminders to the group about Council work, and keeping track of attendance. These three positions provide a solid structure for us to proceed with initiatives without getting bogged down by the natural chaos that ensues when everyone is vying to have their opinions heard. The elected officers are thus instrumental to holding successful and productive meetings.

After the new Council had held our orientation meetings and developed a sense of one another's capabilities and strengths, we held a meeting to select our officers for the remainder of our term. Each candidate for office had their own personal reasons for running, but they all shared a desire to take on an even more active role in the work of the Council. Juan, Kaden, and Manny ran for Chairperson; Emma and James for Vice-Chairperson; and Kim ran unopposed for Secretary. As a Council we decided that the best way to select our officers would be to have each person give a short speech on why they believed they were qualified, so that we could use these speeches as a basis for deciding how to vote for candidates. For example, James spoke about past leadership experience, why he admired the work of the Youth Council, and what he could bring to the position.

Following the voting, Kim secured the Secretary position, James won the Vice-Chairman position by a single vote, and in a field of highly qualified leaders, Manny earned the seat of Chairman. Working with youth who live in different areas around the state and have different backgrounds is not an easy task. It was essential that we organized what we wanted to accomplish at our meetings weeks in advance. Because our time on the Council is limited, our agendas at some meetings consisted of several “action items.” Manny, as Chairman, ran the Youth Council meetings and made sure that those who want to speak were granted the opportunity, as a key part of the Youth Council process is that we hear from everyone at the table. James, as Vice-Chairman, assisted Manny in any way necessary, whether it be posting on the Facebook group and ensuring that people respond to Anny’s emails, or taking Manny’s place if he was unable to attend a meeting. Kim, as Secretary, took notes at every meeting to be distributed to members who were not able to make it to the meeting. We also began every subsequent meeting by going over Kim’s notes and conducting a “Last Meeting Recap.”

The election meeting—despite being one of the longer Council meetings—was a crucial turning point for the Council and really reflected a step in the right direction for us to begin working on our initiatives. It was only our third time gathering together as a group but it was only a matter of minutes before we were able to gain the trust of our fellow Council members and together bring new and exciting ideas and experiences to the table.

16 JULY 2011

Ten Dimensions of Violence

Jamila Sealy-Norvin

Before narrowing down the focus for our main initiative, we invited Carlene Pavlos, the Director of the Division of Violence and Injury Prevention in the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, to one of our Council meetings. The purpose of this meeting was to learn more about different dimensions of violence and to think about how each affects youth in particular. During this training session, we listed the ten major issues that were faced by youth today. This eventually led to the Council choosing anti-bullying as our main focus, though this decision took a number of meetings and discussions. However, this training initiated that process in that we began discussing the potential choices for our focus and we began to realize that bullying constitutes a large element of many other issues faced by youth today. From that point on, we further explored the different types and aspects of bullying-related violence, and considered a number of different ways to deal with and prevent it.

During this training and subsequent discussion, one obstacle faced by a number of Council members was the fact that they do not witness a large amount of bullying within their home communities and where they go to school. Of course, all Council members hear various stories about bullying which are upsetting. But because these incidents do not occur close to home, many members are not accustomed to dealing with or trying to address that type of youth-related violence.

For some Council members, the primary issues facing their communities include teen pregnancy, substance abuse and gang violence, so these were the issues on which they wanted to focus. However, because the choice of initiative was about the Council and the Commonwealth as a whole, we focused on bullying, an issue that does affect a significant percentage of youth within the state.

swearing-in ceremony for new members

25 AUGUST 2011

A few Council members only served for part of the term, due to school and other obligations that made it impossible for them to attend meetings regularly in Massachusetts. However, these members provided invaluable input during the early days of this term's Council. These members are: Ryan Stanley (Barnstable County); Tiffany Rasmussen (Barnstable County); Daniel Baer (Berkshire County); Kevin Qian (Middlesex County); Carlisle Jensen (Nantucket County); William Horyn (Nantucket County); and Arnold Pesnell (Suffolk County).

gsyc meeting with Michael Brown

Kimberly Mendoza

17 SEPTEMBER 2011

On 17 September 2011, the Youth Council held a meeting that Michael Brown, an author and community organizer, also attended. The main goal of this meeting was to better understand how to focus on an “issue” in the community. Understanding how to choose an issue around which to focus an initiative was important for our Council, as we really sought to make the most out of our two years and launch a successful initiative.

During this meeting, we learned that any issue we chose should be specific, winnable, and one about which we were passionate. Moreover, the issue should be one that would help to further strengthen and build the Youth Council. We also decided on the criteria and steps that we should take to move from identifying a global problem to targeting a specific community issue. First, the issue should be easy to explain to community youth members and one that they could quickly understand. Second, the issue should both unite the Youth Council and fit with our own individual and group values and visions. Third, it should help to build the leadership both of the Youth Council as a whole and that of individual members within their own communities. Related to this, there should be a clear, identifiable decision-maker to take the lead on the initiative within the Council. Fourth, the Council decided that we needed to pick an issue that was sustainable—one on which the Council or local communities could continue working for more than one year.

Lastly, we all agreed that the Youth Council needed to deeply understand the ins and outs of the problem and the steps that needed to be taken to solve said

problem. This was something on which we all agreed, and a big accomplishment that came out of this meeting. Overall this meeting was a bit stressful, as it was difficult to hold an open discussion about the issues faced by our communities and which issue would make for a better initiative focus. By the end of the meeting, the issue itself was not clearly defined but we ultimately voted that bullying prevention would be our targeted issue.

11 OCTOBER 2011

gsyc meeting: selecting our initiative

Juan Gonzalez
and Kiara Lum

In selecting the initiative on which our term's Youth Council would focus, we decided early on that the issue we picked should be a widespread and prominent problem throughout the state and not just in certain regions. Everyone agreed from the beginning that we should focus on youth violence, because it was such a glaring feature of all of our communities and something we were keen on addressing and preventing. However, it was more difficult to narrow down our initiative to one type of youth violence. Youth violence encompasses so many dimensions—such as gun and gang violence, domestic violence, and self-inflicted violence, to name a few—that it was difficult to choose only one. After much debate, the council reached the consensus that we would continue the work of the previous council and focus on bullying. We saw this focus for our initiative as further supported by the fact that Massachusetts passed in 2010 a bullying prevention law, and this law's focus on bullying in schools would serve to bolster our campaign. Furthermore, we believed that bullying encompasses many other forms of violence and often relates to self-inflicted violence and broader community issues. Lastly, the Council would be able to focus most of our efforts on bullying in schools, where the majority of youth spend much of their time. Once the initiative focus was finally chosen, the Council members quickly jumped on board and rallied to the cause.

The training we received for picking a strategy was both beneficial and enjoyable, despite the many contentious issues that it raised. We learned about all the factors that we should consider while picking an initiative, including the broad questions and the logistical details we must take into account. We wanted an initiative that was winnable and brought the Council together, but also something with which we were familiar and an issue about which we were passionate. It was imperative that we narrow our focus, and a training on the ten dimensions of violence provided us with useful information about different types of violence and how each affects youth of all ages.

Following this training, the Youth Council members still held different opinions on what the specific focus of our initiative should be. The Youth Council Chairman thus called a special session on 11 October 2011 in order to narrow down our top ten dimensions of violence. During this special session we decided to break into subgroups according to the initiative that each member

avored the most. Each subgroup was issue-specific: self-inflicted violence, gun-related violence, bullying, drugs and alcohol, self-esteem, home violence and cyber bullying, to mention a few. Each subgroup was tasked with developing a detailed strategy focusing on their preferred dimension of violence that could then be implemented by the Youth Council as a winnable campaign. The Youth Council as a whole next discussed all ten dimensions of violence and deliberated on which dimension of youth-related violence we should emphasize. After hours of discussion and debate among members, the Youth Council came to the consensus that bullying formed part of all of the different dimensions of violence, and constituted one of the most debilitating issues facing youth across the Commonwealth.

At the opening of the special session there were different opinions among Youth Council members as to the final proposal of “Anti-Bullying.” Many Council members noted that the previous Youth Council had focused on “Anti-Bullying” and that we should continue with what our predecessors had set in motion. Tensions among Youth Council members grew as we began to narrow down our final choice to “Anti-Bullying,” but we concluded that this was the best approach to raise awareness about all ten dimensions of violence. As the conversation progressed, many Council members began to embrace the idea that “Anti-Bullying” was a stepping-stone to a winnable campaign.

Our term recognized the important work that the previous Youth Council had undertaken, and for that reason hooked our initiative onto the Anti-Bullying Law, the landmark accomplishment of the previous Youth Council. Our own Anti-Bullying campaign was reinforced by this law, which formed one basis for the overwhelming support all Youth Council members eventually expressed for the initiative by the end of the special session. By using this law as the foundation for our campaign, our term has been able to carry on the legacy of the previous Youth Council.

gsyc meeting: MARC program

Ariel Bush,
Michelle Lastra, and
Gabrielle Monteiro

12 NOVEMBER 2011

During our November 2011 meeting, the Youth Council met with Megan McCoy, a representative of the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center (MARC). During this program we learned about what bullying is and what bullying is not, through a presentation and a large group discussion. The MARC representative, Megan, was relatively close to our age, so it was easy to connect with her and to really learn about bullying and how to prevent it. Megan was very direct and informative. She led the program in a discussion-based format rather than a lecture-based one, which we all enjoyed because it allowed us to discuss the topic as a group.

We started the program by discussing common dangers, issues and types of bullying. Bullying affects youth of all ages: elementary, middle school, and high school students. It can also take many forms, such as name-calling, the use of derogatory words, dating violence, cyber-bullying, Facebook fights, the use of weapons, racism, and negative judgments. We also learned about the legal context of bullying in Massachusetts—what constitutes criminal harassment, civil rights violations, and when people can and cannot take photos and videos of others. And of course we discussed the Massachusetts bullying prevention law passed in 2010. This law focuses on bullying in schools, specifically training and instruction on bullying prevention.

We spent a considerable amount of time discussing the recent increase in cyber-bullying facilitated by the use of new technologies. Cyber-bullying can be especially harmful because it stays with and haunts the target. It can also be much more visible because it takes place on-line—often anyone and everyone can see it occurring. And it can happen anytime, not just at school. This makes cyber-bullying hard to avoid, which is why extra effort needs to be made to prevent it from occurring.

In discussing strategies to spread anti-bullying lessons, we discussed the use of the term “bullying.” Because the term has been so frequently over-used, youth today are typically not listening or responding to anti-bullying messages. This helped us realize that some methods of teaching youth about anti-bullying might not work. For example, instead of having a police officer get up and preach to youth, we should get people closer to their age to have a conversation with them. Discussing these issues with someone more relatable might make youth more receptive to the message. And having peer role models would also more effectively send anti-bullying messages.

13 DECEMBER 2011

standUP 2011

Manny Cruz and
Fallon Rice

It was an honor as members of the Governor’s Statewide Youth Council to have been invited to the StandUp 2011 event. Held on 13 December 2011 in the hockey arena of Northeastern University, this event was probably one of the most memorable things that we did as Council members during our term. For a first year event the crowd was incredibly large, with about four to five thousand people from across New England gathering together to take a stand against all forms of bullying. The purpose of StandUp 2011 was to educate, motivate and empower young people to actively promote positive social change in their schools and communities. There was live entertainment, a panel of youth and public speakers, and a “club fair.” The event was also broadcasted live online. Four Council members—Emma, Manny, Leeara and Fallon—were invited to sit on one of the youth panels and answer questions from the audience. It was an especially effective way to get information across to youth, as we often learn best from our peers.

Attending this event was particularly useful for us as Youth Council members, since around the same time we had begun planning our own Blackout Bullying initiative for No-Name Calling Day. StandUp 2011 provided us with a number of resources regarding the most effective ways to begin the process of social and cultural change when it comes to bullying. The event also served as a great opportunity to raise awareness about the Governor's Statewide Youth Council and what we are trying to accomplish. StandUp is set to become an annual event to prevent bullying and to educate youth about its dangers, and the Council has already been contacted to participate in StandUp 2012. We anticipate that each year the event will be bigger and better than the year before, and we look forward to being involved in the upcoming StandUp.

youth council holiday party

James Villalobos

The holidays are usually a time for friends and family to come together and enjoy each other's company, and the Youth Council—as both family and friends—took the opportunity to do just that. On a bitter cold December evening, several Governor's Statewide Youth Council members, including alumni and current members, attended a holiday party at the State House in Boston. We enjoyed light snacks and delicious hot chocolate, which was fitting on a day that cold. Overall it was a casual, laid back gathering. We enjoyed some tunes, caught up with those we already knew, and got to know the alumni members we did not. The holiday party served as a great opportunity to get to know the prior Youth Council members. But more importantly it was a great time, surrounded by our friends and loved ones, enjoying each other's company.

29 DECEMBER 2011

gsyc meeting: pre-planning anti-bullying initiative

7 JANUARY 2012

gsyc meetings on anti-bullying

Andrea McDonagh
and Emaan Syed

The 2008-2010 Youth Council had made bullying its primary focus, capitalizing on the fact that it is an issue experienced by so many and one that manifests itself in many different circumstances. For our own two-year term, we wanted to choose a goal that would make a similar impact upon the lives of youth in Massachusetts. We held many lengthy meetings, during which we discussed different issues faced by youth across the Commonwealth, such as violence,

bullying, the education gap, financial issues, and teen pregnancies. The Council then narrowed the choice to education or bullying, and finally decided to focus on the latter, which many if not all youth see or face on a daily basis. We as a Council also decided that the issue of bullying tied into education, violence, and many other aspects of problems experienced by youth.

In our preliminary meetings, during which we decided on the issue that the Council would target, we held numerous discussions on how we have witnessed or have been victims of bullying, and how eliminating bullying would solve many unnecessary problems that youth face in their day-to-day lives. To us, it was very important to choose an initiative that could be implemented consistently across the state. We believed that the idea and reality of “unity” could be a beautiful antidote to bullying. Soon, the idea of “Blackout Bullying” was born—a statewide initiative designed to show that bullying is never acceptable. We enthusiastically brainstormed ideas to put this initiative into practice: banners, T-shirts, Public Service Announcements, pledges, announcements, rallies, open forums, and discussions.

To be sure, we faced our own set of challenges. Some areas or towns do not have the space to host a rally or forum. Many schools have different schedules for mid-term exam week, making coordinating one day to host events difficult. Some Council members faced a lack of support from their school’s faculty. Adding to all this, we had to pull together the initiative and related events very quickly. It was impossible to have one structured format to embody our Blackout Bullying initiative, but in the end this gave our initiative a powerful uniqueness. In every part of the state a different Youth Council member-led initiative demanded that bullying should not be tolerated, in a manner that was convenient and meaningful to each specific area of the state. The 2010-2012 Council has built on the work of the previous Council in a powerful and significant way, and we are all extremely proud of this accomplishment.

25 JANUARY 2012

no name-calling day and the governor's statewide youth council's blackout bullying initiative

Manny Cruz

In response to the numerous incidents of bullying and name-calling that occurred in 2010 and that led to a series of tragedies, Governor Deval Patrick signed an anti-bullying bill into law. This piece of legislation stipulated that the fourth Wednesday of every January was to be called No Name-Calling Day. The idea behind this day was not simply that it would represent a one-day initiative, but that it would also be the first step towards society addressing the issue of bullying, which until this point had often been viewed as part of

the status quo or “just a part of growing up.” By the end of 2011, after a full year of our Council’s term and much deliberation, we had collectively decided that we wanted to work on anti-bullying because we had this law to help shape our initiative. An initiative focused on anti-bullying could be the first concrete way to make use of the law in a practical and on-the-ground way.

The idea behind the Blackout Bullying initiative in conjunction with No Name-Calling Day was to raise awareness in communities about the impact that bullying has on young people, and to inspire youth to create a more hospitable atmosphere within their schools and neighborhoods. The hope was that by the end of the statewide event, we would have empowered people all over the Commonwealth to aid in our effort to create safer communities and learning environments. The Council believed that bullying was an issue that was universal, not only throughout Massachusetts but across the nation as well. We knew that we had the momentum to hold such an event and hopefully inspire others to follow in our footsteps in trying to improve the everyday lives of our peers. In addition to supporting and participating in the statewide No Name-Calling Day event, many Council members also planned and held events within their own communities on the same day. In this way, we were able to take the main initiative of our Council’s term and use it to help strengthen and raise awareness in each of our own hometowns.

OUTREACH FOR THE BLACKOUT BULLYING INITIATIVE

Emaan Syed
and Kaden Belanger

For the Blackout Bullying outreach process, the Youth Council worked tirelessly to spread the word about No Name-Calling Day held on 25 January 2012. As a group we came up with a number of different ideas on how to realize our Blackout Bullying initiative and the amount of time we had available to implement each of these ideas. Even though we wanted to do much more, we ultimately decided on a task that we felt was ‘winnable’—holding an event in each school to “blackout bullying.” The Council also created a pledge which thousands of students across the Commonwealth signed and supported on No Name-Calling Day: “I pledge to take a stand against bullying and name-calling.” Lastly, in honor of No Name-Calling Day we asked youth across the Commonwealth to wear black—as a way of participating in the Blackout Bullying initiative and taking a stand against bullying and name-calling.

To ensure that the Blackout Bullying events and No Name-Calling Day were successful, it was very important to let as many schools and youth as possible know about this day. In order to spread the word, we took a number of steps. We contacted schools in each of our districts and then worked with each school to plan an event in a short period of time. We created a flyer that was emailed out to hundreds of organizations, schools, and contacts in preparation

for No Name-Calling Day. Both social media and multimedia were heavily used in the outreach process. Students shared the No Name-Calling Day event on both Facebook and Twitter. This was supplemented with news coverage and media articles about the events and pledges being made on this historic day. A few Council members also took part in writing blog posts of our thoughts on bullying and the Blackout Bullying initiative. Within the blog posts, we discussed different ways to prevent bullying and to help victims or witnesses of bullying.

Bullying is something we have all experienced or witnessed, and it was very exhilarating to be part of the outreach for Massachusetts's first annual No Name-Calling Day. This day is significant because it is absolutely imperative for youth to understand the detrimental effects of bullying. Spreading the message of No Name-Calling Day can help empower youth to help end aggressive behavior. This day definitely represented a part of history that will surely build a foundation for addressing and eliminating bullying, as youth across the Commonwealth band together to wear black and take the pledge against bullying.

community blackout bullying events

Kaden Belanger — Hampshire County

I worked with South Hadley High School and Michael E. Smith Middle School for my Blackout Bullying event. Because of the limited amount of time available to plan the event, I was ultimately able to hold only one event at the middle school. The event was very successful though and all of the teachers were on board and fully supported me. The middle school students wore black and signed a large banner as a pledge against bullying. Even more encouraging, both the middle school and the high school are excited to host the event next year.

Manny Cruz — Essex County

It is not every day that you get an opportunity to work alongside the Governor in your hometown in order to spread a message about which you are passionate. Blackout Bullying was our Council's first statewide initiative, and the entire process of launching this initiative was nerve-racking. When we were presented with the opportunity to launch our initiative alongside the first annual No Name-Calling Day, we only had a short period of time to come up with a plan for the event. As a Council, we really came together in order to flesh out the details of what Blackout Bullying would look like. Individually within our own counties, we were tasked with meeting with school officials, local politicians, and even marketing this event to fellow youth.

When the day finally arrived, I was beyond excited. I tried to write a speech but I simply could not complete it because I already knew exactly what I wanted to say. I gave an impassioned fifteen-minute speech to the students of

Collins Middle School, which I had attended. As I spoke, I looked around the room and watched as the students' eyes lit up with the same passion that I felt about putting an end to bullying. We were also honored to have Governor Patrick and Mayor Driscoll speak about No-Name Calling Day and its significance. I received high praise from the Governor in words I will never forget: "Should we call him Reverend Cruz or should we go right to Senator Cruz, I'm just nervous about calling him Governor Cruz. Manny, I am so incredibly proud of you." This event was the single most meaningful thing I have done with my life up to this point. It is the beginning of what I hope will be a lifetime worth of public service to the communities of which I am a part. Since then I have received an increasing amount of support from my community and have inspired the societal changes that I always hoped I would.

Kevin Ma — Middlesex County

For the Blackout Bullying event I held at my school in Middlesex County, I first asked the principal for permission to collect student signatures on a banner that displayed our pledge to take a stand against bullying. I solicited the graphics teacher's help in creating the banner and ended up staying two hours after school in order to finish it. I made sure to tell everyone to wear black on the day of the event, including teachers. I changed my Facebook profile picture to the icon of Blackout Bullying and posted multiple status updates the night before the event, reminding everyone to wear black. I even joked to some of my friends that if they didn't wear black, I would never speak to them again. On No Name-Calling Day, I spent the hours before lunch running around finding tables to borrow for the banner, carrying the tables to and from the lunchroom (and almost hitting a couple of students who were eating their lunch in the process), and then collecting signatures in the middle of the lunchroom. I informed every student who came up to the tables about the origin and purpose of No Name-Calling Day and the anti-bullying initiative of the Youth Council. I walked around taking pictures of people who were wearing black, and even was able to use the excuse that I was taking pictures to go to class late! At the end of No Name-Calling Day, I gave the finished banner to my principal, who immediately asked a janitor to hang it outside of his office. Lastly, I spoke to the *Somerville Journal* about the event for an article they were writing on the day. Overall, the day was an enormous success in addition to being a lot of fun!

Eve Manghis and Cooper Voigt — Nantucket County

It was a bit difficult for us to implement many Blackout Bullying initiatives on Nantucket, because it is a very unique community and different from many other counties within the Commonwealth in that we rarely witness incidents of bullying-related violence. But we did manage to recognize Blackout Bullying with a rally and in doing so, motivated tremendous support for the cause of putting an end to bullying statewide. We decided to target younger kids in elementary school. However when we suggested holding a new event on No Name-Calling day the new principal, while expressing that it was a great idea, informed us that the school could not host such an event during midterms, though would look into it for future years. While disappointing and

frustrating, it is understandable given that the school has undergone a number of administration changes in the last couple of years. And this experience definitely highlighted for us how difficult it can sometimes be to successfully host such events.

Andrea McDonagh — Norfolk County

As part of the Blackout Bullying initiative, I helped the town of Weymouth host an anti-bullying rally. The rally took place in the Abigail Adams Middle School and consisted of two sessions: one for all fifth grade students and a second for all sixth grade students. In both sessions, each and every single student wore black in support of our initiative. One of the first things students saw were pictures of recognizable celebrities, people like Justin Timberlake and Justin Bieber. We asked what these people all had in common. The answer was that they all had been bullied when they were young. We then moved to an open forum where we asked students questions such as: “Why do you think bullying happens?”; “How do you think someone who is being bullied feels?”; “What can we do to put an end to bullying?”. Following each question, dozens of small hands eagerly shot into the air. Throughout the entire session, students answered willingly, openly, and passionately. The overwhelmingly positive reception these Weymouth fifth and sixth graders gave our message was truly inspiring.

29 FEBRUARY 2012

BORN This way Foundation launch

Fallon Rice

On February 29, 2012 at the Lady Gaga Born This Way Foundation launch, singer and songwriter Lady Gaga spoke about doing across the country what the Governor’s Statewide Youth Council seeks to do within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts through our Blackout Bullying initiative. Much easier for her to say as a worldwide phenomenon and musical celebrity! I was honored to attend the Foundation’s launch as a representative of Cape Cod and Nantucket Island. During the launch, people from across the country stood up and told their stories about being bullied or bullying. It was eye opening to be able to hear both sides of the story. Within the youth forum, Lady Gaga gave us a heartfelt pep talk about standing up for ourselves. I was also able to see the interview of Lady Gaga by Oprah Winfrey, during which Oprah asked Gaga questions about the new foundation and why she was starting it. Lady Gaga’s stories were powerful and could not have been better told. She spoke of her childhood, her rise to stardom and the struggles that have come along with it. “Dare to be different” is the motto that she seems to live by. And no one could do it better. Gaga launched this foundation in a brave way, inviting hundreds of people to a forum to witness and learn about its purpose. The speakers that Lady Gaga invited were informative and overall the event was a huge success.

gsvc meeting: no name-calling day debrief and new initiatives

31 MARCH 2012

gsvc meeting: planning our term's last initiatives

19 MAY 2012

youth council reunion with governor DEVAL L. PATRICK

James Villalobos

9 JULY 2012

It is not very often that all the members of the Governor's Statewide Youth Council, both past and present, come together. However, on a pleasant day in July current members and alumni of Governor Deval Patrick's Statewide Youth Council gathered at the State House to attend a reunion that the Governor himself had asked to be held. We were each seated next to other past or current members who we felt we needed to get to know better, in the hopes of creating the types of networking opportunities that are at the core of what the Youth Council does and hopes to promote. Meeting and getting to know former Council members was a particularly invaluable experience, as many of them continue to accomplish so much within their communities and many of us definitely look up to them and their work on the previous Council.

While we respected and understood how precious the Governor's time is given his busy day-to-day schedule, we really wanted to use this opportunity to reflect together as a group on the Youth Council: the work of the two Councils to date, the effects this work has had in and on our respective counties, and most importantly how we plan to move forward and create a lasting legacy. Although current Youth Council members see each other every other month, this reunion was particularly important because we had the Governor himself there. Given the fact that the Youth Council was originally Governor Patrick's idea, it was incredibly important for us that he see the progress and strides that together as a group we have been able to make.

Governor Patrick's insight and advice during this reunion was incredibly inspiring. He challenged us to do much more than our violence-inspired initiatives to date. He encouraged us to help push and expand the Council's focus and agenda in the future, for example by starting a campaign to close the achievement gap in Massachusetts. Governor Patrick emphasized that we, as Council members, can do so much more with our positions. He also stressed that what we do going forward—how we continue to make contributions after our time is done and remain involved as alumni—is crucial to the success and growth of future Councils.

Anti-Bullying Public Service Announcement

Kiara Lum,
Kevin Ma and
Kimberly Mendoza

The Youth Council decided that it would be a good idea to film a Public Service Announcement (PSA) to spread awareness about bullying and about our work on the Council. We wanted to let the public know that we are seeking to make an impact, and a PSA seemed like a good way to reach youth in their homes, particularly youth who are unable to attend our events. We thought that a PSA would be a good way to advertise our Blackout Bullying initiative, leading up to a screening of the movie *Bully* in the fall of 2012. In other words, we thought that a PSA would help keep the momentum of Blackout Bullying going.

Before writing the scripts, we decided as a group on a number of goals for the PSA. We wanted to use it to tell youth across Massachusetts about the dangers of bullying and what they can do to prevent it. We thought it was important to explain what the Youth Council has done and will continue to do to help address the problem of bullying. We also wanted to talk about the effects of bullying, such as depression, and encourage people to reach out and seek help. But more importantly we wanted to use the PSA to give hope to anyone who is going through the difficult experience of being bullied and provide information about resources if they are feeling depressed.

The process of making a PSA required a significant amount of planning on our part: conference calls, speaking with the press team and videographer, writing and revising a script, and planning the wardrobe and props. All of the PSAs we filmed had an overarching theme. They start off a bit gloomy, in black and white, and then slowly change into color. You can then see that we are all wearing brightly colored shirts to emphasize the message that there is hope when everything seems dark. We had watched a couple of other PSAs about bullying which we thought were fairly depressing and so we decided that we wanted to portray a more positive message that something can be done about bullying.

Before we started filming, four of us submitted scripts to be reviewed by the press team, and we then helped each other revise and shorten each script, focusing on the lines we believed would be the most powerful and impactful. Following this, the long filming process began—it took around four hours total. We had decided to keep the set up simple—a white background with one of us sitting on a stool—so that we could get our message across without having too many distractions. At first we were a bit nervous, as sitting on a stool in front of intensely bright lights was a little bit intimidating. We each did a couple of takes but thankfully we did not have to memorize the lines since we had someone reading them to us.

Overall it was exciting to film the PSAs at a studio in Cambridge. The experience was an incredibly educational and fascinating one, to witness the creative

process behind filming a PSA and all of the different takes and camera angles that were used. And we fervently hope that the PSA accomplishes its intended goal of spreading awareness about preventing bullying and the Youth Council's work on this important issue.

gsyc meeting: wrapping up — final report and bully movie screening

28 JULY 2012

THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

local community building

Manny Cruz — Essex County

In my own community, I have always been viewed as a leader. The day after I was sworn in as the Essex County representative for the Governor's Statewide Youth Council, my responsibilities expanded even more. With this newly acquired title, I began to host events at my university and former middle school, in addition to working with various non-profits to try to inspire youth to become contributing members of society. Aside from our Blackout Bullying campaign and other youth advocacy work I have been able to accomplish in my community, I have also had the opportunity to connect with youth on a personal level. Although I am beyond the age to be an official member of the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Salem, I actively attend their events and speak on behalf of youth there. I was honored to be able to speak at an annual event known as the "Champions Dinner," during which I told all the youth in attendance about what I have accomplished and what I hope to accomplish in the future. Lastly, I have also been invited to several committee meetings to work on a way to improve the school system for the youth of Salem. My community now looks to me as an expert on issues affecting youth and how we should begin to go about addressing them. My experiences and position on the Youth Council have significantly improved my ability to be able to fully embrace this role.

Kiara Lum — Worcester County

I have learned valuable lessons from my fellow Youth Council members and from our shared experiences that I have been able to bring to bear on

strengthening my own community. These experiences have taught me what a true leader looks like, and in return I have shown my appreciation by doing my own community building. I have learned that no matter how young we are or how “small” we may feel in the bigger picture of life, we can make a difference by creating positive change around us. It is important to step up and take initiative, rather than simply adopt the stance that “someone else will do it” or “someone else can worry about and fix it.” All of my friends on the Council have led and continue to lead by running and participating in programs that benefit their own communities. This inspired me to continue my own community service and take on leadership roles in my school and hometown. I have had the pleasure of being the President of my class as well as contributing through other organizations to better the community. Learning about what others do in cities like Springfield or a small town on Martha’s Vineyard has opened my eyes to the possibilities of being a leader and has encouraged me to stay involved in Hopedale, my hometown. Both the experiences I have had on the Council and those gained from doing community building in my small town have been extremely rewarding because I enjoy the work I do and feel like I have truly made a visible impact.

ANTI-BULLYING movie screening

Leeara Hunt,
Kevin Ma,
Emaan Syed, and
James Villalobos

After the success of No Name-Calling Day on 25 January 2012, with the large number of schools that participated, the Youth Council wanted to continue to raise awareness about our anti-bullying initiative. We decided to hold an event on October 18th to kick off the 2012-2013 school year. After lengthy discussions about the type of event we wanted to host, the Council agreed upon holding a public screening of the newly released movie *Bully*. We strongly felt that this movie successfully captures a glimpse of the true physical and emotional pain that bullying can cause for young adults and children. The Council believed that the movie also sends a great message to youth and would enable them to understand and emotionally connect with what happens to victims of bullying. Lastly, we thought that it would also provide some inspiration for youth to spread peace amongst their peers.

Our plan was to screen the Public Service Announcements (PSAs) we filmed directly before the movie, as people may not have been able to view them on television. We believe that the purpose of the PSA compliments that of the movie—to shine light on the victims of bullying, how bullying affects them and others around the Commonwealth. The goal was to motivate the audience to want to do something about bullying, to encourage a call to action. The Council has created a message that we believe students across the state should find encouraging, providing people with the opportunity to become allies and help

stand up to bullying. Following the movie screening, a few Council members held a discussion with the audience about the film and its message.

To create a larger impact with our anti-bullying campaign, the Council also agreed upon sponsoring a walk against bullying around the city of Boston directly following the film screening. We plan to walk from the film screening to the State House, where we hope to have a couple of speakers, including Governor Patrick, address the crowd about the Blackout Bullying initiative. We want to spread our message to the wider public, who we hope in turn will be inspired to pass along our message to even more people. Our main goal as the Youth Council for the rally and film screening is to invite young leaders from their respective communities to come together to inspire their peers to end bullying.

On the morning of October 18, 2012, everything finally came together. Approximately 300 students from all around the Commonwealth of Massachusetts fluttered into one theatre room at the Loews AMC in Boston Common to watch the movie *Bully*. The movie definitely caught everyone's attention for all you could hear were shrieks and squirms at the disgust of the bullying scenes. Following the screening, we engaged the collective youth in an open discussion. Judging by the responses, we knew we had a special group of motivated individuals. Fueled up and energized, all of us hollered rally cries that revolved around anti-bullying as we marched through the Commons and into the State House. There, Deval Patrick spoke of his bullying initiative and how the event perfectly captured the essence of a true anti-bullying campaign. Proud and honored, he gave his last regards on how much power the youth have and the great changes we can achieve with this power. This same crowd that bustled into the theatres at 10 a.m. now left the State House united and stronger than ever because of one common aspiration, to end bullying once and for all.

Through our Blackout Bullying campaign more generally we hope to encourage the community to take action. From there, it is up to all the people involved to pass along and educate more and more people, to ultimately end bullying in our Commonwealth.

YOUTH COUNCIL ALUMNI NETWORK

Kiara Lum

The Governor's Statewide Youth Council currently permits, under its Executive Directive, members to serve one two-year term. While it is understandable that the opportunity to serve on the Youth Council should be constantly offered to new youth within the Commonwealth, many members wish they could reapply after their term has expired. In addition, despite some members moving away to college or moving on to other endeavors outside of Massachusetts, it is still important to many of us that we are able to stay involved and stay in touch. To achieve this, we hope to create an alumni network to continue the rewarding experience we've shared on the Council. This will give us a way to assist future councils and convey the knowledge and

experiences we have acquired to new members. We envision Council alumni helping future councils with anything on which they may need guidance. For example, we could help with planning an initiative or event, and provide advice on logistics or organizing strategies. Since the actual focus of the events and initiatives will be completely up to future Council members, we see alumni as providing a supporting role in any area on which they need help. In addition, we could also brainstorm our own ideas to support their campaign, creating our own projects that could supplement their events.

We also hope that an alumni network will serve as a resource for former Council members as we move on to other ventures and challenges in our lives. Our aspiration is that we can continue to learn from one another and receive advice on topics such as colleges or jobs. As future alumni of the Governor's Statewide Youth Council, we would love to stay a part of the Governor's Council environment and attend future events. It is incredibly important to current members that we keep up to date on the issues on which future councils are working and the matters that become important to the youth of the Commonwealth as well as the Massachusetts State Government. These issues will still be relevant to our lives even after we graduate from the Council, and our hope is to continue to still have an impact on and the power to improve these issues.

For us current members, it is not enough to just walk away from the Council after serving on it for two years. There are still major problems affecting youth, and these problems are constantly changing and evolving. As former Youth Council members, we feel that we could be a tremendous asset to future councils and great advisers for them and the government. What matters to the youth of the Commonwealth and the current Council matters and will always matter to us. We would like to remain a part of that and help in any way that we can. Ultimately, this is why we feel it is important to stay informed and involved, in addition to the fact that doing so would simply make us more engaged members of our community.

REVIEWING APPLICATIONS FOR THE NEXT YOUTH COUNCIL

Emaan Syed

Every two years, the Governor's Statewide Youth Council must select twenty-eight new candidates to replace those whose terms have expired. Choosing the best candidates for the Youth Council is hard work, mostly because it can be difficult to choose from a large number of qualified candidates for the positions. The process itself involves around forty-eight unique reviewers, who consider hundreds of applications coming from the fourteen counties of the Commonwealth. As a reviewer and current Youth Council member, I am a part of this wide-ranging group that chooses the new council members. The other reviewers include people in a variety of departments in the government, representatives of youth organizations, and other students my age as well.

The review process begins with outreach. Every current Youth Council member takes part in spreading the word across the state about the Youth Council and the opportunity to apply. Each member alerts students in their respective counties who are passionate about helping youth that there is this wonderful, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Some of us send announcements to all the schools in our county, while others go visit different youth organizations across the Commonwealth to let people know about this amazing opportunity.

Once the application deadline has passed, the lengthy process begins of reviewing each application and evaluating each prospect for the role of youth representative for their respective county. The backgrounds and experiences of these applicants are really diverse and each applicant has the potential to bring a new and unique perspective to the Council. Preferably, we will choose one male and one female representative for each county. The reviewers also look for council members that would bring to the Council a range of personalities, education, and diversity. There is no one specific 'ideal' type of Youth Council member, and the application itself is not based on grades or academic standing. The youth council really does strive to create a distinct group of young people that will represent the great diversity of students in the Commonwealth. In the weeks ahead, we will strive to select a distinguished, positive, and impactful group of students to be part of the third term of the Governor's Statewide Youth Council.

our legacy

Manny Cruz,
Juan Gonzalez,
Eve Manghis, and
Fallon Rice

Over the past two years, the Governor's Statewide Youth Council has endeavored to create a model for addressing and preventing bullying for the entire Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Our hope is that this model spreads across the country, inspiring and creating new ideas and cultures for communities. As a Council, we have taken the initiative to jumpstart a Blackout Bullying campaign. The Council sees the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as a leader on this front. We have worked hard to make our state a safe and welcoming place for youth, and hope that members of our community continue to work together to support and empower each other.

People often think of bullying as insignificant, when in reality young people across the world suffer from this imbalance of power everyday. The Council has come to understand and recognize that bullying comes in all different forms, and that even if it doesn't manifest as physical violence, all types of bullying represent a form of violence. However, we don't want to just recognize this issue, we want to do something about it. We have worked hard to emphasize and spread awareness about more than a simple definition of

the word “bullying.” In doing so, as a Council, we are at the forefront of our communities in putting a stop to this pervasive, persistent and often subtle and undetected issue. Our legacy is that we use our powerful voices to inspire youth across the country to act upon the issues about which they are passionate and that will make their community stronger.

Beyond Blackout Bullying

Kaden Belanger,
Kat Brauner,
Danisha Dumornay, and
Gabriella Monteiro

Blackout Bullying has been the focus of our Council for the past two years. From rallies to Public Service Announcements, we have spent a significant amount of time and energy raising awareness about a predicament that is known and experienced nationwide. Now that our time on the Council is coming to an end, our hope is that the momentum we have created through our Blackout Bullying initiative carries into the future. As council alumni, we hope that no matter where we are in our careers and our education, we will find our way back to this cause that was so significant and pivotal to our time on the Council. More importantly, the issue of bullying still affects the lives of so many youth today. Our intention is to continue to reach out to our local communities and spread awareness about the events that take place on No Name-Calling Day. Through these efforts we aspire to keep the momentum of Blackout Bullying going and to create positive changes for youth and our society.

During our term we hosted multiple events in various communities. Although our time on the Council is coming to an end—and the new Council may not decide to focus on bullying—our hope is that these events will continue to be held by community members in order to keep the focus on bullying. In many instances, learning about and hearing viewpoints on issues from your peers is more effective than hearing about them from an adult. We would like youth leaders to continue our work in order to make the Commonwealth a better place.

Dear Council of the Future

Michelle Lastra,
Kiara Lum,
Jamila Sealy-Norvin and
Cooper Voigt

Congratulations and welcome to the Governor’s Statewide Youth Council! We are very proud that you are seeking to make a difference in your

community and want to be part of a larger network that will allow you to be a role model for other youth. It is now your turn to pick up where we left off and represent youth from across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

The 2010-2012 Council focused primarily on preventing bullying within our communities. During our term, we worked to spread awareness to stop this unnecessary trend of harassment not only throughout our communities, but also as part of a nation-wide movement. We chose to focus on bullying as our initiative because we found that as a Council, we were most passionate about this issue.

However, do not feel obligated to choose the same initiatives as we did. It is only our hope that you choose your initiative with the same passion, enthusiasm and dedication as we did. During your time on the Council, the issue of bullying may not be as pressing or prominent an issue within the state. Our communities face many other important and worthwhile issues. Violence, economic development and health care may be your future focus. Regardless, we hope that you as a Council will have the same hope, determination and overall enthusiasm to work to make our communities a better place. And as you embark on your new journey we ask you not to forget about bullying and to remember that bullying is the foundation of many problems that we as young people struggle with every day. You are free to decide your initiative and create your own legacy, but as you do so, ensure that the initiative you choose is one about which you are passionate. This is the method for success. Whatever issue you try to tackle, if you are passionate and enthusiastic about it, you will continue to live up to the standards past Councils have set for you.

We as a Council have demonstrated the ability to collaborate and unite in solidarity for a cause. We hope you do the same by staying positive and believing in each other's capabilities and ideas. Continue to get involved in your community and collaborate with others to do everything you can and learn as much as possible. And do not hesitate to seek help or give it, especially in picking an initiative. Make us proud!

Good luck!
GSYC Members 2010-2012

Advice to the new youth council

There are a number of pieces of advice or tips that we wish we had known or realized more fully when our term on the Council began. We share these with future council members in the hopes that they will make the most out of their term.

- Challenge yourself.
- Make sure you are passionate and committed.
- Make the most out of your two years, because it goes by quickly.

- Find a way to keep in touch with everyone on the Council... and talk to everyone on a regular basis.
- Be on time.
- Communicate.
- Carpool.
- Answer e-mails from the Governor's Office.
- It's alright to laugh... a meeting without laughter is often a meeting wasted.
- Support the other Council members in any way you can.
- Don't be afraid to voice your opinions.
- Be open to others' opinions.
- Recognize how powerful you are as a Council.
- Push the boundaries.
- Get even more involved in your own community.
- Keep your community informed about what you're doing on an ongoing basis.
- Be proud of being a Council member.
- Don't limit yourself and your activities to this Council while you are a member—get involved in every meeting and opportunity.
- If you need advice, talk to previous Council members.
- Pass it on and pay it forward.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The members of the 2010-2012 Youth Council would like to express our warm and heartfelt gratitude to Governor Deval L. Patrick for providing us with the opportunity to grow as youth leaders over the past two years by creating the Council. We sincerely appreciate that Governor Patrick recognizes the importance of providing the youth of Massachusetts with a voice to influence the direction of youth-related policies. We are thankful for both his evident interest in each of us as individual Council members as well as his simultaneous attention to the activities of this term's Council as a whole.

The Council wishes to gratefully acknowledge all staff and volunteers who have supported their efforts including the following individuals:

William “Mo” Cowan
Governor’s Chief of Staff

Secretary JudyAnn Bigby
Executive Office of Health and Human Services, EOHHS

Marilyn Anderson Chase
Assistant Secretary, Office of Children Youth and Families, EOHHS

Anny Jean-Jacques Domercant
Director, Governor’s Office of Community Affairs

Lori Nelson
Deputy Director, Governor’s Office of Community Affairs

Dahlia Bousaid
Director, Office of Adolescent Health and Youth Development, MA
Department of Public Health

Glenn Daly
Director, Office of Youth Development, EOHHS

The Council also wishes to thank and acknowledge all the adults who have given so much of themselves to support the Council.

SUPPORTERS:

**Massachusetts Department of Public Health
Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee**

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EXECUTIVE ORDER no. 501

BY HIS EXCELLENCY

DEVAL L. PATRICK
GOVERNOR

CREATING THE GOVERNOR'S STATEWIDE YOUTH COUNCIL

WHEREAS, youth across the Commonwealth are community residents, students and leaders;

WHEREAS, youth are acutely aware of the challenges that face our schools, and are therefore uniquely positioned to develop creative solutions to ensure Massachusetts provides top notch education to all its students;

WHEREAS, youth violence affects communities, families and schools across the Commonwealth, claiming lives and causing immeasurable pain to victims and their families;

WHEREAS, youth are motivated to get involved in their communities and are eager for civic engagement opportunities;

WHEREAS, providing opportunities for the youth of Massachusetts to address the problems facing our communities through assuming leadership roles, working together and cultivating problem-solving skills will ensure a stronger workforce and democracy for the future;

WHEREAS, notwithstanding their ideas, energy and commitment, too often the voices of Massachusetts youth are not heard;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Deval. L. Patrick, Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution, Part 2, c. 2, § 1, Art. 1, do hereby establish the Statewide Youth Council as follows:

Section 1. There is hereby established the Governor's Statewide Youth Council, which shall be overseen by the Executive Office of Health and Human Services. The Council will make recommendations to the Governor on issues the youth of the Commonwealth are uniquely positioned to address, including but not limited to civic engagement, education and youth violence.

Section 2. The Council shall consist of two youth representatives from each county in the Commonwealth, who shall be appointed by the Governor. The Governor shall designate the Council's Chair. Council members must be between the ages of 14 and 20. Interested candidates shall submit a personal essay and include a letter of reference from an adult familiar with their strengths and interests including but not limited to youth organization leaders, school officials (including teachers), employees of the Department of Youth Services or the Department of Social Services. Any additional application procedures shall be established by the Executive Office of Health and Human Services in consultation with the Governor's Office of Community Affairs.

Section 3. All members of the Council will serve without compensation in an advisory capacity and at the pleasure of the Governor. Members shall serve for no longer than two years or until they turn 21, whichever first occurs. The Council will meet no fewer than four times a year, and at such times and places as determined by the Secretary for Health and Human Services or her designee. The Secretary and/or her designees, in consultation with the Governor's Office of Community Affairs, will oversee the meetings. Council members shall not be considered employees of the Commonwealth for any purpose.

Section 4. The Governor may direct the Council to form subcommittees to focus on particular challenges facing Massachusetts youth. The Governor may designate persons with relevant subject matter expertise or experience to consult with the subcommittees. Such persons will serve on these subcommittees without compensation in an advisory capacity and at the pleasure of the Governor. These subcommittees will carry out the functions assigned to them and report to the Council as directed.

Section 5. This Executive Order shall continue in effect until amended, superseded, or revoked by subsequent Executive Order.

Given at the Executive Chamber in Boston this 24th day of April in the year of our Lord two thousand and eight and of the Independence of the United States, two hundred and thirty-two.

DEVAL L. PATRICK
GOVERNOR
Commonwealth of Massachusetts

WILLIAM FRANCIS GALVIN
Secretary of the Commonwealth

GOD SAVE THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

